

Dress and Grooming

Many of us object to being judged for employment based on how we look. We prefer to be hired because of our skills and abilities, not because of our dress and grooming. But like it or not, appearance is important.

Employers hire people they believe will “fit” into their organization. Skills, experience, and qualifications are important, but so are dress and grooming. Your appearance expresses motivation and professionalism. Dress as though you want the job, as though you already have the job. A visit to the company may help you decide the appropriate clothing to select for your interview. A good standard is to dress a step above how the best-dressed person dresses for a similar job. When in doubt, err on the conservative side.

Your appearance is a statement of who you are. Your clothing and grooming should create the image that will help you get the job offer.

First Impressions

Most of us have heard the expression, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Remember this when preparing to meet with a prospective employer.



The picture you create will greatly influence your chances of being hired. Most employers form a first impression during the first seven seconds of a meeting. Not much is said in this short time; early judgment is based strictly on appearance. Furthermore, studies reveal that employers consistently ask the question, “Does the individual look right for the job?”

Your attitude and confidence level are all affected by the clothes you wear. When people take the time to dress for success, they tend to feel good about themselves. Image alone will not win the job offer, but it will go a long way in building respect.

Clothing

There are no absolute rules regarding dress. Your selection will vary based on your occupation, location and preference. A business suit for a construction job or overalls for an office job would not be appropriate dress. The goal is to look the part, to have your appearance be consistent with your occupation. Neat, clean work clothes would be suitable for assembly, production or warehouse positions. Sales and office positions require business clothes. A conservative suit would be the recommended style for professional and managerial positions.

Common sense and good taste are the best guides in selecting clothing for the interview. Avoid faddish styles and loud colors. Jewelry should be



Grooming Tips

- Keep hair clean, trimmed, and combed.
- Men should be clean shaven and/or keep mustache or beard neatly trimmed.
- Women should use make-up sparingly.
- Keep fingernails neat, clean and trimmed.
- Keep teeth brushed and breath fresh.
- Beware of food odors. Use a breath mint if needed.
- Be freshly bathed and use deodorant.
- Use perfumes/ colognes sparingly or none at all.

conservative and kept to a minimum. Clothing should be pressed and shoes should be shined. Clothes should fit comfortably. A basic rule is to dress one step above what you would wear on the job. You want the employer to focus on your skills, not your clothes.

Grooming

Personal grooming is just as important as what you wear. You may select the right clothes, but neglecting personal hygiene can ruin the image you wish to present. Review the grooming tips on the reverse side before meeting with an employer.

Body Language Tips

Body language consists of gestures and movements that give others clues about things such as whether or not you are confident. Your posture can also convey self-confidence or uncertainty. Always keep your body upright to convey competence, pride and confidence. Don't come across as uncertain or vulnerable by slacking your shoulders.

Tapping a pen or pencil, wrapping hair around a finger, playing with a bracelet, ring or earring can send a message of nervousness, uncertainty, or uneasiness. You can easily use a pen or pencil to release nervous energy — used with a pad of paper, this signals that you are making notes and are keeping up-to-date on things.

Nodding your head during conversations or interviews is actually quite important and indicates agreement or understanding, which in turn elicits a positive response from you.

Do not put your hands in your pockets while speaking to an employer or during an interview. Worse yet, do not jingle your keys or spare change as you talk. Sitting with your hands clasped in front of you won't do either; it comes across as an appeal.

What should you do with your hands? Your hands can all of a sudden seem large and awkward. Hand movements should be natural, but this is easier said than done. Practice in front of a mirror; or ask a friend, a group of friends, or family members to evaluate your appearance as you rehearse for a job interview. Others might notice movements or gestures you alone might not notice in the mirror. Video taping the practice session could prove useful; as you watch the videotape over and over again, you will be able to perfect your presentation. You may be surprised at the improvement you will achieve.

Goals of Appropriate Dress and Grooming

The primary goal is to “feel good” about the way you look and project a positive image. When you feel good about yourself, you naturally convey confidence and a positive attitude. These nonverbal messages are as important in the interview as the verbal skills you use in selling your qualifications. Persistence and follow-up are the keys to a successful job search. If you are serious about employment, plan your follow-up. There is no such thing as a wasted effort, and the only dead lead is the one you chose to kill. Situations change and the employer who is not hiring today may be looking for someone with your qualifications in the future.

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